



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2015

No. 109

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Father of all, give us Your wisdom in these challenging times. May Your wisdom ignite within us reverential awe for You. Inspired by Your wisdom, help our Senators to strive to ensure that their thoughts, words, and deeds glorify You. May our lawmakers not forget that You are an ever-present help for turbulent times, eager to deliver those who call on Your Holy Name.

Lord, sustain us with Your might that we will live free from fear. Mighty God, salvation belongs to You. Continue to shower us with Your blessings.

We pray in Your majestic Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, I asked the Obama administration to step back from the Iran negotiations, press pause, and reexamine the point of having the talks in the first place. That would have been the most rational and reasonable approach for the White House to take, especially considering that its own allies in the

Senate were using phrases such as “deeply worrying” to describe the direction of the talks.

But instead of taking the time to re-examine basic objectives with its partners and agree on the nonnegotiable elements of any deal—things such as anytime, anywhere inspections, complete disclosure of previous military-related nuclear research, and phased relief of sanctions tied to Iranian compliance—the White House acquiesced instead to artificial deadline after artificial deadline and opportunity after opportunity for Iran to press for additional concessions along the way.

The result is the comprehensive nuclear agreement announced today. Given what we do know so far, it appears that Republicans and Democrats were right to be deeply worried about the direction of these talks.

It seems Americans in both parties were right to fear that a deal inked by the White House would further the flawed elements of April’s interim agreement, that it would aim at the best deal acceptable to Iran rather than one that might actually end Iran’s nuclear program. Remember, ending Iran’s nuclear program was supposed to be the point of these talks in the first place. What is already clear about this agreement is that it will not achieve or even come close to achieving that original purpose.

Instead, the Iranians appear to have prevailed in this negotiation, maintaining thousands of centrifuges, enriching their threshold nuclear capability instead of ending it, reaping a multibillion-dollar windfall to spend freely on terrorism, dividing our Western allies and negotiating partners, some of whom will undoubtedly sell arms to Iran, and gaining legitimacy before the world.

This was an entirely predictable result—in fact, the most predictable result given the administration’s stance. As noted back in 2012, here is what I said: “The only way the Iranian regime

can be expected to negotiate to preserve its own survival rather than to simply delay as a means of pursuing nuclear weapons is if the administration imposes the strictest sanctions while at the same time enforcing a firm, declaratory policy that reflects a commitment to the use of force.”

But, no, the administration never did that. Instead, it relied upon train-and-equip programs instead of forward presence, emphasized special operations forces in economy of force efforts, pursued a drawdown from Iraq and Afghanistan based on timelines, not battlefield conditions, and executed a drawdown of our conventional and nuclear forces and a withdrawal of those forces by both attrition and redeployment. Through actions such as these and by eschewing any declaratory policy toward Iran, the President made clear to the world, contrary to his rhetoric, that all options were not on the table. All options were simply not on the table. Knowing this, the Iranians never feared for their survival—of course, the survival of their regime being their No. 1 goal. And so we have the deal we have today.

It appears we have lost the chance to dismantle Iran’s nuclear program and that will now become a challenge for the next President to confront, regardless of political party. But the Senate has yet to receive the final text of the agreement. We will not come to a final judgment until we do. The country deserves a thorough and fair review right here in the Senate, and that is just what we intend to pursue.

Committees will be holding hearings, witnesses will be coming to testify, and then Congress will approve or disapprove the deal in accordance with the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

The test of the agreement should be this. Will it leave our country and our allies safer? Will this agreement leave our country and our allies safer?

There are several things we will be looking at in particular as we weigh

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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